ale

CAMRA

Cambridge & District Branch Newsletter Issue 414 September 2025

Cambridge CAMRA Winter Beer Festival 2025 We are going home!

Cambridge Corn Exchange 10-13 December

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Pub News

So many pubs, so little time! I'll start Ale 414 with a brief visit to some of the many beer festivals that have been held in and around the Cambridge CAMRA branch area in the last couple of months. Starting with successful events hosted by the Individual Pub Company owned **Rose and Crown, Impington** (4th- 6th July), **Queen Edith, Wulfstan Way** (31st July-2nd Aug), and the **Haymakers, Chesterton** (14th – 17th August). These pubs which usually have a good selection of real ales, mostly from Milton brewery during normal trading, offered festivals of up to 18 different guest ales, complemented by real cider and craft beers.

Their sister pub, the **Devonshire Arms, Devonshire Road** took part in the 18-day 15 pubs trail called the CB1 Beer Quarter festival. Always up for a challenge, I undertook to visit all the participating pubs within the given time frame (18th-31st August), hoping to win the 2025 Beer Quarter pin badge. Inevitably, I failed. It didn't help that both Peterborough and Bury CAMRA Beer festivals were happening during the first week. Research having necessitated that I visit both on more than one occasion. Loosely based along and around Mill Road Cambridge, but stretching as far as the **Blue Moon, Norfolk Street**, to the north and the **Salisbury Arms, Tenison Road** to the south of Mill Road, the challenge proved too much for me, and I only managed to visit 11 of the 15 pubs. The highlight for me was the consistently high quality of beer in all the pubs. I especially noted the Greene King Abbot Ale in the **Six Bells, Covent Garden**, The Mad Squirrel offering in the **Alex, Gwydir Street**, Nene Valley Brewery Release the Chimps in the **Empress, Thoday Street**, Bowlands Brewery, Pheasant Plucker in the **Cambridge Blue, Gwydir Street** and another Nene Valley brew called Stay Rad, which I found in the **Royal Standard, Mill Road**.

Many of the pubs held several one-off events and tap takeovers during the 18-day event. I managed to visit three: the Moonshine Brewery and Simon's Cider pop up bars which I found in the **Geldart, Ainsworth Street**; the Burnt Mill Craft Ale tap takeover of the **Live and Let Live, Mawson Road**, and we took part in the **Kingston Arms' Kingston Street** Cheesy Monday Quiz where

Branch Diary

Don't forget that all Branch members are very welcome to attend the monthly business meetings, as well as our socials.

Tuesday 14th October Branch Meeting
Brewers Inn, Milton
Thursday 16th October Thursday Throng at the Kingston
Tuesday 11th November Branch Meeting
Hudson's Ale House
Wednesday 10th - Saturday 13th December
Cambridge CAMRA Winter Beer Festival,
Cambridge Corn Exchange
For a fuller list of local events please check **cambridge-camra.org.uk/events/**.

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Pub News continued

the Harvey's Sussex Best proved to be the perfect complement to a board of English cheese.

Other pubs taking part in the trail, and which I promise to visit soon: the **Petersfield, Sturton Street**, the **White Swan, Mill Road**, the **Dobblers, Sturton Street** and **Calverley's Brewery, Hooper Street**.

To list just a few more successful summer beer festivals: the **Three Horseshoes, Stapleford** (Aug 23-25th), the **Plough and Fleece, Horningsea** (22nd-24th Aug), and the **White Horse, Milton**, which was held in June.

The **Black Horse, Rampton** lived up to its title of Cambridge CAMRA Rural Cider Pub of the Year by hosting a cider festival with over 40 ciders and perries (21st-25th Aug).

Histon's 5-day Beer festival, hosted by the Red Lion was in full flow when I visited the opening today (1st- September). With 60 beers and 20 ciders it is an annual event we all look forward to. Profits go to support local causes. No doubt, I will return later in the week

Finally, I'd like to mention the first beer festival hosted by Graham and his team at the **Duke of Wellington, Willingham**. The open-air festival was supported by volunteers who donated their wages to a local charity. Willingham is now fortunate to be home to two outstanding real ale pubs. The "Duke" and the **Bank micropub**.

I'm looking forward to the upcoming **Dykes End, Reach** Beer festival (19th-21st Sep). **So many festivals .... so little time.**

Pub News

A new initiative launched by MP for Ely and East Cambridgeshire Charlotte Cane seeks to amplify the voices of local publicans and ensure that their voices are heard. The first meeting, held in July, was attended by local publicans, including some from Waterbeach, Reach and Ely, and was supported by CAMRA colleagues from Ely branch.

The initiative, which appears primarily to be aimed at supporting rural pubs, is to be called The Publican's Network. It is most welcome – and most definitely needed. As Charlotte is quoted in the Ely Standard: "Pubs are the heart of our community but there are severe pressures putting them at risk far too often"

One of the main causes of distress; that of rising business rates applies, of course, to both rural and city pubs. Perhaps addressing this issue would be a good place to start?

Vikki and Chris are quickly settling down in the **Ickleton Lion, Ickleton**. The latest Newsletter, issued by the community management committee makes mention of the high-quality food on offer – notably sausage rolls "perfect with a cold pint".

We have received a message from Grace, the licensee at the **Red Lion, Whittlesford**. She is keen to offer locally brewed real ale and asked our advice. We have provided a list of local breweries.

Another message, this one from William of the **Rupert Brooke, Grantchester** told us that he has built a relationship with **Milton Brewery**. Milton beer, brewed in Waterbeach, is now regularly featured, and they are planning to run a tap takeover soon.

The management team that runs the **Hat and Rabbit, Fulbourn** and the **Tram Depot, Cambridge** has posted that they are excited to be taking over the **White Hart, Fulbourn**.

We are sorry to lose Helen and Theresa from the **Sun Inn, Waterbeach**. Helen is leaving after 17 years of service as landlady and licensee, "for a fresh start".

The pub is set to be taken on by a regular customer and friend who helped in the pub when Andrew her beloved husband and joint licensee died suddenly in 2023.

Goodbye too to Bob, the manager of the **Haymakers, Chesterton**. Bob is leaving to go to university. He hopes to fulfil a lifetime ambition to become a paramedic. Current deputy manager, Neil, will be promoted to manager.

It has been announced that the **Railway Vue, Impington** will be closed after Saturday 6 September for a refurbishment and will reopen on Friday 17 October.

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Pub News continued

The **Bell Inn, Balsham** opened under new licensee, Rich, on Tuesday 2nd September.

Just outside our branch area, we've heard news that the **Crown and Pipes, Fenstanton** is to be reopened by Neil and Caroline who have previously run the **White Swan, Conington** and the **Poacher, Elsworth**. They are hoping for an October reopening for this pub which was last open in March 2020.

News from Ely and District CAMRA: The Planning Inspector has backed East Cambridgeshire Planning's refusal of an application to convert the **Lazy Otter, Stretham** into a guest house. The pub sits on the bank of the River Great Ouse, just off the A10 between Cambridge and Ely. At one time it was a destination pub but has been closed for a few years. Ely and District CAMRA and others objected to a change of use application. East Cambridgeshire Planning agreed. Now the Planning Inspector has agreed too. This doesn't mean that the Lazy Otter will reopen any time soon, but it does mean that it could flourish again.

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Cambridge CAMRA Winter Beer Festival Returns!

We are delighted to announce that 2025 Cambridge and District CAMRA Branch Winter Beer Festival is to go ahead

It will be held in the Cambridge Corn Exchange. This is especially significant because in 1974 it was the venue that held the first ever CAMRA organised beer festival.

It feels very much like we are going home!

The festival runs from 10th to 13th December 2025.

There will be more than 90 Real Ales; Ciders and Perries, Craft Beer and International Beer too.

Further details and times of opening can be found on our website.

The success of our festivals depends upon CAMRA volunteers. We can always use more!

Further information on how to volunteer can also be found on our website.

Cambridge CAMRA Special awards 2025

Once a every year, as part of our awards presentation evening, CAMRA Cambridge and District branch likes to celebrate the diversity and excellence of the pubs in our area by issuing awards to licensees that have excelled in services to real ale and in their support of the local community.

This year's special awards go to:

Real Ale Champions

Hayley and Steve Pellegrini (*Portland Arms, The Alex, Castle Inn, all Cambridge, Hudson's Ale House, Trumpington*.) Celebrating twenty years as licensees at the Portland Arms, Hayley and Steve, under their business name of Pelle Pubs now look after 4 premium Cambridge Pubs. Each time they have taken over a pub they have turned it from being so-so into a must visit venue. The beer is always good!

Jess Clausen (*Elm Tree, Cambridge*). Jess is no stranger to winning awards. The Elm Tree was our City Community pub in 2022, and it won the City LocAle award in 2023, but her main achievement has been to keep a high standard of beer quality on 7 hand pumps in a cosy back street Cambridge pub.

Linda and Chris Warren (*Former Licensees, the Bank, Willingham*) 12 years ago Chris was looking after Willingham Post Office when he discovered that Lloyds bank had vacated and were selling the building which he and Linda would eventually turn into the first village micro pub in the CAMRA Cambridge and District Branch Area. The Bank Micropub proved to be a resounding success, and it became a regular entry in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide. They now feel it is time to move on. We couldn't let them go without an award!

Lifetime Achievement Award

This award is given to licensees who have made a major contribution to a pub or pubs over a long period of time – sometimes decades. Often this award is given as the winner is reaching retirement

Julie and Derek Stearn (*Former Licensees, Kings Head, Fen Ditton*) When Derek and Julie took on the King's Head, Fen Ditton they fully expected to be leaving it within a few months. 21 years later they have retired, leaving behind a pub and a community that they had come to love. Derek told us that it hadn't always been easy. Low periods included COVID, the smoking ban, and the increasing business rates. Like all our Lifetime Achievement award winners they were dedicated to their pub and fully deserve this award

Will Wright (*Former Licensee, White Horse, Swavesey*) As landlord of the White Horse, which he took on in 1998 Will has always championed community values. He held what he claims was the 2nd ever pub-initiated beer festival in our district, was at the forefront of getting his pub registered as an Asset of Community Value, and reintroduced the village barrel rolling competition to the community festivities. Now a leading member of the Parish Council, he continues to argue for fair treatment of pubs.

Ava and Alan Hewitt (*Former Licensees, White Horse, Milton*) 19 years ago, Ava and Alan, had not thought about running a pub. She was an intensive care nurse, he an engineer, but there was something about the White Horse that attracted them. At the time it was a lager drinkers' establishment – selling 90% more of the amber stuff than ale. Gradually they managed to re-educate their locals, and the pub now serves a good a selection of beer as you'll find in many a village pub. They love the business and would not have retired had it not been for Alan's failing health. Their son, Adam, is still the chef at theWhite Horse.

Mary and Phil Cole (*Former Licensees, the Bell, Balsham*) Mary and Phil are retiring from the industry after 25 years of service, notably in the Wheatsheaf, Quy and in the Bell, Balsham. Their 6 years in the Bell saw them win several awards for the quality and variety of their dark beers and for their services to the local community.

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An Elysian View

Award winning Home Brewer and Ely and District CAMRA Branch member Jim Bailey

As an American living here in England, I just love British Real Ale. Served directly from the cask at The Dove in Bury St Edmunds (other pubs are available) it is one of life's simple pleasures. So, after spending 14 years stationed here in the UK with the US Air Force, when 'the needs of the military' forced me to move to Texas in 2003, I really missed it!

I'm no expert, but my recollection is that in 2003, while there were some good craft beers available, Texas wasn't the best place to be for a real ale lover - in fact, I don't recall ever finding a single place offering Real Ale. What Texas did have, was incredibly friendly people. We loved the sense of community in our new neighbourhood and the welcoming, accommodating neighbours. One of these lovely neighbours was Gil. Gil had a keg with a picnic tap and a wide selection of bottled beer that he had made himself in his garage that he shared with his neighbours. Man, I was so impressed. So, Gil taught me how to brew with liquid malt extract, and I was soon boiling my own wort in my garage. I don't remember a single batch that I thought was bad. But in hindsight, I realise it wasn't great - but because I had made it myself from water, I was quite happy with myself and enjoyed my bottle conditioned ales.

I continued brewing when I returned to the UK in 2006 but not nearly as often. I slowly improved my equipment.

Sometime around 2015, a few friends expressed an interest in brewing, and we created the 'Suffolk Boys Brewing Society', as they all lived in Suffolk. As time passed, our club whittled down to just my friend David Southern and I. We both loved brewing and together we got much better at it! We read, and often referred to, John Palmer's 'How to Brew' and we enjoyed critically evaluating our beer to improve on it the next time - whether it was a recipe adjustment or a process change - brewing the same beer repeatedly meant we could see how our changes affected our beer. We perfected the (surprisingly small) amount of priming sugar needed for the perfect 'cask like' condition and began brewing much more often. We needed a lot more bottles and were not above scrounging through dumpsters behind pubs for bottles!

In the fall of 2019, David's local brew pub landlords, Pat and Paula, sold us their Grainfather G30 - an all-in-one electric brew system - as they had upgraded their set up. This resulted in a sea change for us, moving our brewing process to a new level. With the precision controls and counter flow chiller, our beer improved greatly. We were fermenting in a 7-gallon glass carboy set in a cupboard, so temp control was a challenge.

One memorable brew day, while my wife was away (thankfully), I was brewing in the kitchen when the filter on the recirculation pump inlet at the bottom of the Grainfather clogged as I began to chill the wort through the counter flow chiller. I tried everything I had at hand to clear it but to no avail. In a panic, all I could think about was where to temporarily put this wort so I could get down to the filter and clear it, without ruining my batch. Then I saw the sanitised glass carboy sitting there with a big, sanitised funnel on it ready to receive the output of the counter flow chiller. Brilliant! So, I started scooping out the (just boiled) wort and dumping it into the carboy to hold it until I could access the filter in the bottom. Around 2/3 of the way in, I heard a loud explosion, quickly followed by a burning sensation on my bare feet. Initially confused, it took me a second to realise the carboy had literally blown its bottom out but remained standing exactly in place on top of the broken bottom glass, and my wort covered the kitchen

floor. The next day I bought my SS Brewtech fermentation unit.

I first learned about the CAMRA GBBF homebrew competition on a neighbourhood social media platform in 2022. On a small group chat with other home brewers, someone mentioned this new competition that CAMRA was holding at the GBBF. I happened to have 6 bottles of a clone of Russian River's Pliny the Elder IPA so I sent them in. As a brewer in the competition, I was given a Trade Day ticket so went down to Olympia in London to see the winner's announced. I was thrilled to win a bronze in the IPA category. Never expected that, and we loved the feedback from the judges as well as the affirmation from people not related to us that our beer was good!

So, in 2023 I submitted a hazy 5.8% New England IPA with 3 separate dry hop additions, which won silver in the category. So thrilled to have this award, I set my sights on gold for this year's competition. I tweaked my 2023 silver NEIPA recipe up to 6.8% and matured it longer in the bottles before sending 6 bottles off to the Nailmaker Brewing company in Yorkshire (sponsors of the competition) for first round judging. I didn't want to just call it the style of beer as I always had in the past, so I called it 'Because I'm Hoppy!' I couldn't believe it when an email popped up on my phone from Amy Nash, Senior Events Manager at CAMRA, with the word 'Congratulations…' in the subject line. She said I'd won gold in category so progressed to the GBBF final round of judging at the NEC and invited me to attend the Trade Day awards.

The awards ceremony started out with the overall bronze in the national homebrew competition, and I was shocked when I heard my name called out. I went up and collected my award, did pictures and interview, and then received many good wishes and congratulations from folks over my few days there.

It was surreal. It still feels incredible even now while writing this. What a journey. I am so happy that the beer I make is rated so highly from experts in the industry. Now it's time to set my sights on the overall Silver in 2026!

Bruce Patten

A.I. is too important to be left in the hands of machines

The A.I. we're referring to isn't Artificial Intelligence, it's Ale Intelligence, of course. We're not technophobes, we just don't trust anything incapable of smelling, feeling or tasting to create something as delicately balanced as Landlord. That's why we have five hands-on, Heriot-Watt trained brewers involved in every step of the process, from barley delivery to filling the casks. This way, we can make sure that every sip of Taylor's is as delicious as humanly possible. Machines may one day take over the world, just be thankful you won't be around to drink their terrible beer.

All for that taste of Taylor's

TIMOTHY TAYLOR'S LANDLORD

Lost pubs of Cambridge(shire)

Before telling the late of last issue's mystery pub, some notices:

First, thanks to everyone who visited our little stall at the Cambridge Beer Festival back in May, and to Mark for looking after it. Various work and family commitments over the summer have got in the way a bit, but rest assured, things will start to happen. Meanwhile, if you haven't already, please join and contribute to the Cambridge Pub History Group on Facebook.

To the lady who came into the Kingston Arms a few months ago with some old photographs: Mark has lost your contact details, so please get in touch with him again.

Hot on the heels of his survey of Cambridge pubs from the 1851 Census, Robert Tonks has produced a second book, Chesterton Pubs 1851 to 1911. I haven't got a copy yet myself, but if anyone is interested in finding out more and buying a copy, let me know at the email address below and I'll pass the message on.

Last but not least, I have also been approached by Justin Omps, who is writing a book about the public houses that served as gathering places for RAF and USAAF personnel during the Second World War. He would like to flesh things out with anecdotes and particularly any contemporary photos, so if you've got anything, again, let me know and I'll pass it on. (I've already told him about the Crown/Flying Pig and the cigarette burns on the bar.)

Right, to business. Last issue's mystery lost pub, correctly identified by Terry McHugh, was the Harvest Home in Fen Ditton.

The pub has acquired almost legendary status in some quarters, being the last of its kind in the area: it had no bar, the beer instead being fetched directly from the cask in the tap room; and it didn't have a spirits licence, only beer and wine. Both of these features were commonplace in the 19th century but are now almost extinct.

When the last licensee, Mabel Smith, retired in 1981 (at the age of 72), she had been running the place for over 50 years. According to the report at the time in the *Cambridge Evening News*, she had taken over the pub from her grandmother, who herself had been landlady for 40 years, and another relative had run the place even before that. So the Harvest Home had been in the same family for a century! And that's just the sort of investigating I like doing. So I investigated.

The earliest record of the Harvest Home comes from 1870, when George Muggleton, a wheelwright son of a master carpenter, was one of over half a dozen publicans and beerhouse keepers charged at the Bottisham Petty Sessions for having short measures. He was fined 1s (and 12s costs) for having "four earthenware measures deficient".

It wasn't only his measures that were short: he died three years later at the tender age of 33.

The next time the place appears in the records is in the 1881 Census, when it was in the hands of William Flack, but he was soon off to the Ancient Shepherds as a brewer's assistant.

His successor was one John Newman, who is only once recorded at the Harvest Home, in 1889, when he was cautioned at the annual Bottisham Licensing Sessions. It doesn't say what for, but it was likely for serving outside of permitted hours.

He was gone soon after, because we have a new name listed in the 1891 Census, James Peachey. Nevertheless, John looked to be the most likely candidate for the member of the family referenced by Mabel – a suspicion confirmed when I finally uncovered Mabel's maiden name: Newman. But how exactly were they connected?

Now this took some piecing together, I can tell you! I'll spare you the tedious details of my sleuthing, but it was made all the more complicated by the

fact that the descent, as it were, is through the female line and at first I didn't have the relevant maiden names in order to make the connections. But I do love this sort of challenge.

First I needed to determine which of the two John Newmans living on Green End, Fen Ditton, in the 1891 Census was the relevant one. This meant tracing their respective descendants to find a match. And the winning candidate was the John Newman originally from Swaffham Bulbeck, not the Fen Ditton-born coprolite digger. And in 1891, though he was no longer at the Harvest Home, he was living just a few doors away.

John had four sons, two of whom, Frederick John and James Herbert, married two of the daughters of the aforementioned James Peachey – village life, eh? James married Francis Mary Peachey and went off to London, so that rules that line out. Frederick married her older sister, Rosa Ann, and it is this branch of the family that kept the Harvest Home to the end. (Incidentally, another Peachey, Charles, from the White Swan, Swaffham Bulbeck, had been cautioned at the same sessions as John in 1889.)

So now we turn to the Peachey family, who in one form or another ran the pub for over 90 years.

James was Fen Ditton-born and worked as a general labourer. He married Clara, from Old Chesterton, in 1874, and in 1891 they had four children, three daughters and a son, living with them at the Harvest Home. It seems that he left the pub-related duties to his wife – in fact in the 1901 Census it is she who is given as publican while his occupation is brewer's labourer.

Following his death in 1904 she continued running the place until 1930, when at the age of 76, she handed over to her granddaughter, the then Mabel Lilian Newman, after 40 years in harness. She retired to Church Street, living near the King's Head, which was run at the time by yet another John Newman.

Records are a bit patchy but it would appear that Mabel was the fourth child of Frederick and Rosa Ann Norman. In 1939 she also had living with her at the pub her elder brother, Cyril James Norman, who worked as a horseman on a fair. Mabel's occupation was given as "unpaid domestic duties", which would probably also include unpaid beer-fetching duties when they had customers. An older sister, Margaret, lived next door.

She remained Mabel Lilian Newman until January 1954 when, at the age of 50, she married Arthur W Smith. And in December 1981 they retired together to Waterbeach, upon which Tolly closed the pub and an era was at an end.

Back to Cambridge for the next one.

If you recognise it, used to drink there, know someone who used to drink there, or have any gossip about it, get in touch at pub-history@cambridge-camra.org.uk.

Cheers! **Steve Linley**

Apples and Pears

I'm dedicating this late summer edition of Apples and Pears to two very successful cider festivals that have taken place in our region over the last few months. The first was a one-day festival and formed part of Oakington's Village Day; The second festival, was a five-day affair which took place at our rural cider pub of the year, The Black Horse at Rampton.

Oakington Village Day – Cider Festival, Saturday 28th June

This was the first time that Oakington Village Day had incorporated a full-blown cider festival as part of it's one day village event. They've had a beer tent in the past, and last year there was a small cider stall, manned by Blue Barrel – Oakington's very own cider producer, but they'd never had a cider bar previously, as far as I am aware.

Emma and Leo (Blue Barrel) had mentioned the event at one of our cider club meetings, and with my experience of running the Swavesey Cider Festival for six years, they asked if I would be prepared to help. Ali Cook, Emma (M) and her partner Richard also said they'd get involved, along with Simon Doyle and Toby – we were a small but perfectly formed team. Some of us had attended a couple of the Village Day committee meetings to discuss where we could set up and how we were going to get power to our bar.

With the help of one of my good friends from Swavesey, Mark Squires, we arranged to erect our marquee (borrowed from Swavesey Community Pavilion) on the day before the event. We all just did what Mark asked us to do and before you knew it, the marquee was up (with a few minor hitches), so we were good to go.

Over the course of time the cider bar had been extended to include a food offering too – so as well as the cider we now also had a full-on cheese counter, along with pork pies and accompaniments to deal with. We arrived very early on the Saturday morning to set up, it was a very warm, but windy day.

By the time we opened the adjacent beer tent had gone alfresco – their gazebo had been demolished by the strong winds. Sales started slowly for the first hour but from then on, right through to closing, we had a queue going out of the tent. By the end of the evening, we had sold out of most ciders, pretty much all the cheese had gone, and the pork pies had all been devoured by 5pm.

The event, and the cider bar, had been an unmitigated success – here's to next year!

Black Horse Cider Festival – Rampton Thursday 21st – Monday 25th August

I'd been looking forward to this festival all summer – I was not to be disappointed. Joe, Ella and their team put on a fantastic event – Rampton are so lucky to have this pub in their midst.

There were 45 ciders (plus 6 non-alcoholic options) to choose from – something for everyone. They had a different food truck each day. There was an 'apple' based quiz on the Thursday evening, which Joe hosted. Live music as well as an open mic session on the Sunday. Plans are already afoot for the same bank holiday weekend next year.

The only disappointment for me was, due to previous commitments, I could only make two days of the event – and on one of those I was driving. I was not to be deterred though! The ciders and perries on sale came from a total of 25 different cideries, 10 of which were local. The Black Horse was also the first venue to ever stock Cranes Fine Sparkling Brut – a bottle of which is now sat in my beer fridge waiting for Christmas. The first cider to sell out was Sassy Rosé, a

French cider of low alcoholic content (3.3%), I can see why it sold so quickly, it is so easy to drink. It was closely followed out of the door by Purbeck Pirate (4.9%), a medium cider from Dorset.

The Landlord's favourite (Joe) was Watergull's Discovery (5.4%), while the Landlady (Ella), opted for Blue Barrel's Black Dabinet (5.5%). Rather surprisingly - only for its low alcohol content, my personal favourite was Udders Orchard's Katkin (2.8%), which hails from Huddersfield. It was the perfect drop for me on the day I was driving.

My second visit was on the bank holiday Monday, this time I was a passenger as my wife and I had gone with some good friends of ours Ali and Dave, and Dave had very kindly offered to drive.

The weather was lovely, so we sat in the garden - which was pretty rammed by the time we left – we'd also sampled some of the food from the Korean food van, which was also very good. Not driving gave me the ability to try quite a few of the ciders on the menu, which subsequently meant I slept very well that evening.

The Black Horse have a large selection of ciders and perries all year round, draught and bottled, so they are well worth a visit whenever you are in the area.

Wassail! **Jerry Ladell**

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GOOD BEER GUIDE 2026 WE'RE IN IT

The Wrong Side of the Bridge?

One of my favourite pubs in Cambridge has become the **Pickerel Inn** in Magdalene Street. Although very central, I always seem to find it quieter than I expect. My theory is that it is just the wrong side of the bridge, and so doesn't attract as many sightseers as it should…

With an alcohol licence dating as far back as 1608, this pub has an unparalleled history. Once a gin palace, an opium den, a brothel and even an undertaker, the bar staff are keen to talk about the pub's history and even the upstairs ghost. I am not so moved by the tales of the past but I am keen to have a beer!

From the front, there are 2 smallish bars to the right, separated by a wall such that the staff are constantly switching between to pour whichever beer is ordered. There are usually 8 or 9 cask ales. On this visit I am pleased to order Lacon's Bloom, a really gently carbonated lemon/honey 4% pale. It is not that sweet at all, and I think it smells very like a packet of Lockets!

All the beers I try here are in excellent condition. There are plenty of staff, in fact more than most pubs. They are chatty, informative and most clearly very proud of their pub! Without asking, I am offered a taster for my next beer; I go for Wantsum More's Head. This is a 3.7% copper-hued, quite hoppy bitter. I find it quite nettly and it also has a burnt toffee about it. Another cracking ale.

It is time for some food and I go for chicken kiev(s), served very crispy, doused in garlic butter with some superb fries and leaves topped with parmesan. Nicola goes today for a couple of fish cakes from the lighter options menu and presented with an extensive salad. We swap some salad and chips (as we often do). The food we find is very fairly priced. However, we are taken aback by forking out £4.05 for a "regular" diet coke!

The Pickerel always seems to have at least one dark beer on tap, and more often than not it is Theakston's Old Peculier. What a treat this is, virtually a dessert in fact. At 5.6%, this strong dark ruby bitter we agree has strong hints of dark cherry and also reminds us of those chewy little cola bottle sweets. We take our drinks for a stroll and discover what is quite the sun trap! We settle for a little while but it is too hot for us. It would surely have been rather hot here today for the undertakers business that was once stabled here. There is also a large covered shaded drinking area, but we decide to head back indoors. The Pickerel also tries hard to support local breweries, and we are pleased to see Milton Sparta. We find this straw coloured 4.3% pale ale (£6.10/pint) very "clean" – my way of describing that fresh hop taste, with some hints of stoned fruits.

Finally, there is time for one more beer. I decline the challenge of balancing a coin on a lemon in aid of the Macmillan Cancer Support; I am too busy taking a photo of the wall. One frame contains the Pickerel's notorious mathematical clock, copies of Ale magazine and some free doggy biscuits. I should imagine that our Ale magazine favourite, Gladys has been here before!

Another local (ish) beer is Oakham's Kingdom, described as a cask aged stout. £6.70 is a high price I believe for a 5.0% ale, so I only go for a

half. This ale has dry coffee hints and we again find it has strong hints of dark cherry, not unlike the Old Peculier at all.

This pub clearly has a strong and lengthy past, there is even a little leaflet available for those that like to know more about this fine traditional coaching inn. History aside, I count this pub as one of my favourites because of its quality of staff; excellence of service; superb food and of course the perfection (and range) of its traditionally well-kept cask ales.

Fred Laband

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GOOD BEER GUIDE 2026 WE'RE IN IT

Paws for thought - The wonderings of a pub going dog

My male human is constantly moaning at me, especially when he is in a hurry to get somewhere. Why? Well, it's because I like to stop and sniff at every message that other dogs have left me – and there is usually a lot of them. My female human sides with me. "Gladys is reading her pmails" she says. She is right. It is a useful means of talking to canine compatriots. I have been known to leave a message or two myself!

Leaving pmails isn't a practice restricted to dogs. Male humans do it too. The difference is pubs have special areas called toilets. Male human pmails are collected in one place, so they don't have to sniff around everywhere to read them.

My first picture this week is from the recently opened Ickleton Lion. It is now a dog friendly community pub. I met George, Poppy and landlady Vikki whilst on a Cambridge CAMRA minibus tour.

The tour also included a trip to the Queen's Head, Newton. The owner, Robert has restored the rear area of the pub and made it into a bar extension. This is a return to the original layout, and it looks very good! I was pleased to catch up with my friend Georgie.

Another tour picture, and another recently opened pub. This is from the Side Quest in Little Shelford.

My friend William is the licensee of The Rupert Brooke, Grantchester. He sent me an invitation to visit his pub which I gladly accepted. It is a lovely pub, right next to Grantchester meadows. He was celebrating their introduction of Milton Brewery beer. I met Harriet there. I think she must be my biggest fan!

Though that title could also go to Chrissiey. We met when I visited the Duke of Wellington, Willingham. The Duke is another pub that has recently opened after a long time of being closed.

Their summer beer festival was supported by pub locals who donated their "wages" to charity. My male human had a long chat with Sally and Caroline. Sally is a long-term CAMRA member and was very happy with the work we are doing in promoting pubs. The "Duke" is a free house which always has a Papworth Brewery beer on tap.

Lastly, can I introduce you to my friend Teddy. Teddy can often be found in Thirsty, Chesterton Road where he supervises staff as they serve very good craft beers and top-notch wines!

Woof for now, Gladys Emmanuelle

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